

XXVII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

WE have received the following letters addressed "To the Editors of 'The Ibis'":—

SIRS,—I think the following observations may interest your readers.

On Saturday, April 19th, at 3 P.M., I noticed an extraordinarily large flight of birds coming towards my camp from the other side of the Red Sea. Their course was N.N.E.; my camp being situated on the shore of the Sea in lat. $29^{\circ} 5' N.$, long. $30^{\circ} 4' 15'' E.$

On the closer approach of the birds I found that they were Storks in a rather exhausted condition, in flocks of 500 or 600 birds each. They were flying at a height of about 70–75 feet above the sea. Immediately on its arrival each company soared up high in the air in a kind of spiral column, presumably to spy out the land, and finding no water (the nearest well was some fourteen miles distant) continued their course in a N.E. direction across the desert. This went on until 5.30 P.M.

I instructed some members of my staff to try to make a rough estimate of the numbers in the flocks, and on comparing notes we found that each detachment seemed to consist of about 550 birds, and that no fewer than 47 detachments had arrived, and, after performing their spiral evolution, had continued their journey to the north-east.

Can you give me any explanation as to where this enormous army of birds (about 30,000) came from and whither they were going?

Yours &c.,

Jebel Tanka,
by Abu Zenima,
Eastern Desert, Sinai.

ROBERT H. MACKENZIE
(*Mining Engineer*).

[The birds were, no doubt, White Storks (*Ciconia alba*) on their return journey northward to breed in Europe and Asia, but their congregation in such enormous numbers is, we believe, a fact that has not been previously recorded.—EDD.]

SIRS,—In his paper on a collection of Birds made in Northern Somaliland, Mr. D. A. Bannerman makes the remark (p. 297) that the female of *Passer castanopterus* does not appear to have been previously described. Mr. Bannerman seems not to have consulted a paper of mine ('Ibis,' 1905, p. 509) on a most interesting collection made by Captain A. E. Hamerton in the same country, in which a description of the female of this species was given (p. 518).

Yours &c.,

H. F. WITHERBY.

326 High Holborn,
London, W.C.
May 11th, 1910.

SIRS,—In the 'Ibis' of April 1910, vol. iv. p. 359, it is stated of two Yellow-browed Warblers (*Phylloscopus superciliosus*) from East Ross-shire that they are "the first known to have occurred on the Scottish mainland." May I point out that these birds were recorded in the 'Annals of Scottish Natural History,' 1910, p. 55, as "the first record for the autumn of the occurrence of this interesting migrant on the mainland of Scotland," and that the first actual record of the Yellow-browed Warbler on the mainland of Scotland, as also its first occurrence in spring in the British Isles, were recorded in the 'Annals of Scottish Natural History,' 1909, p. 183. The date of this interesting occurrence was April 11th, 1909, near Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire.

Yours &c.,

HUGH S. GLADSTONE.

Capenoch, Thornhill,
Dumfriesshire.
May 30th, 1910.

SIRS,—On the 28th of April last an example of the Senegalese Sand-Grouse (*Pterocles senegalus*) was obtained at Santa Croce Camarina in the province of Syracuse, and was forwarded to me in the flesh.

The specimen in question, an adult female, when shot, was in company with another individual of the same species,

presumably its mate, on some rough uncultivated land, and a very high wind from the east was blowing at the same time.

For this interesting addition to my Collection and for the particulars concerning its capture I am indebted to the kindness of the Marquese Arezzo and his son the Duca di Celano, large land-owners in the above-mentioned district.

I believe this to be the first recorded instance of the occurrence of this bird not only in Italy, but in Europe.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.,

JOSEPH I. S. WHITAKER.

Villa Malfitano,
Palermo, Sicily.

June 2nd, 1910.

[We believe that Mr. Whitaker is quite correct in stating that the Senegalese Sand-Grouse has not been previously recorded in Europe. It is, however, well known in Algeria and Tunis, see Whitaker's 'Birds of Tunisia,' vol. ii. p. 240.—EDD.]

Death of Lieutenant Boyd Alexander.—Most of our friends will already be acquainted with the sad news of the death of Lieutenant Boyd Alexander, who was killed on April the 2nd in a skirmish with the natives at Nyeri, some 60 or 70 miles to the north-east of Abeshr, the capital of Wadai, while endeavouring to force his way from Lake Chad into the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. We hope to be able to give some account of the life and work of this great Explorer and Naturalist in our next number.

A rare Jay in Berlin.—It appears from a notice in 'The Field' (vol. cxv. p. 779) that a living example of the rare Jay, *Garrulus lidthi*, of the Loochoo Islands, has been lately received by the Zoological Garden of Berlin. This Jay was first described by Bonaparte in 1850, and was beautifully figured by Wolf in the Zoological Society's 'Proceedings' (1850, p. 80, pl. xvii.) from a single specimen in the collection of Prof. van Lidth de Jeude, of Utrecht.

The bird was stated to be from Japan, but was sought for in vain by all subsequent collectors until 1904, when, as announced in this journal*, it was rediscovered in one of the islands of the Loochoo group by the collectors of Mr. Alan Owston, of Yokohama.

New Birds at the Zoological Society's Gardens.—In the Report of the Council read at the Anniversary Meeting of the Zoological Society on April 29th, it was stated that living examples of the following twelve species new to the Collection had been received during the year 1909:—*Pomatorhinus erythrogeus* (from India), *Crypsorhina varians* (from Java), *Hæmatopus palliatus* (from Jamaica), *Ostinops viridis* (from Venezuela), *Manucodia atra* (from the Aru Islands), *Melanerpes superciliaris* (from Cuba), *Trachyphonus cafer* (from South Africa), *Eos cyanogenis*, *Trichoglossus nigrigularis*, and *Aprosmictus cyanopterus* (from New Guinea), *Agapornis nigrigenis* (from Rhodesia), and *Speotyto hypogæa* (from Venezuela).

New "British Birds."—In 'British Birds' for April last three additions to our avifauna are announced—*Locustella lanceolata*, *Totanus stagnatilis*, and *Lanius senator badius*. *Totanus stagnatilis* is a well-known species on the Continent, but no certainly authenticated British specimen existed in any collection. *Lanius senator badius* is a mere sub-species of the Woodchat (*Lanius pomeranus*), which, until lately, was believed to be found only in Corsica and Sardinia.

But *Locustella lanceolata* is quite a good species, nearly allied to our Grasshopper Warbler (*L. naevia*). It is remarkable that when Seebohm wrote the fifth volume of the 'Catalogue of Birds' in 1881 there was not a single example of this bird in the British Museum. Now, we are glad to say, there are in the National Collection upwards

* 'Ibis,' 1905, p. 288.

of 50 skins from various localities, which well illustrate its wide geographical range, namely :—

- Santander, Spain (*Irby*, 26th June, 1876).
- Lake Baical (*Dybowski*).
- Lower Pegu (*Oates*, Oct.—Feb.).
- South Tenasserim (*Davison*, Dec.—April).
- Malacca (*Dr. Maingay*).
- Andamans (*Wimberley*, Dec.).
- Labuan (*Everett*).
- Manilla (*Maitland Heriot*).
- Amoy, May; Chefoo, May; Canton, Oct. (*Swinhoe*).
- Chinkiang, May (*Rickett*).
- S. Yezo, Japan, August.

To these localities we may add Heligoland (see *J. f. O.* 1910, p. 415) and Hainan (*Hartert*, Nov. *Zool.* xvii. p. 229).

The B.O.U. Expedition for the Exploration of Central New Guinea *.—The last letters from Mr. Goodfellow are dated on April 3rd from Dobo, Aroo Islands. He was then on his way back from Amboina, where he had been obliged to go to hire some additional carriers; he had engaged twenty-four men from Banda, who seemed likely to do well. The "base-camp" of the Expedition had been removed from Wakatimi up the valley of the Mimika to Toupoué, a village about six miles from the mountain-range, where a new store-house had been built, and the natives were quite friendly.

The Gurkhas had cut a road for some miles up the mountain, by which Mr. Wollaston and Capt. Rawling had reached a considerable altitude. During their ascent an important discovery was made—that at an elevation of about 2000 feet there existed a tribe of pygmies, of which the average height was about 4 feet 3 inches. It had been generally supposed that there were no dwarf races in the Papuan Sub-region.

Mr. C. H. B. Grant, a well-known collector, has been sent out by the Committee to replace Stalker (whose unfortunate death has been already reported*); he left England on June 18th for Singapore.

* See above, p. 377.